

(1)

When I came to Montreal from BC (University of BC) in June 1960 there were several indigenous Black organizations serving a population of about 5000 - 10,000 Blacks. There was the Union United Church which ~~safely~~ celebrated its 65<sup>th</sup> birth day in

1972 1969. There was the Negro Community Center which started in the Church basement and recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Birth day in 1977.

The was the Negro Citizenship Association, dedicated to good citizenship and the struggle to unite black people against the injustices of ~~immigration and the discrimination age~~ <sup>perpetrated</sup> against immigrant and native born blacks. It too had its beginning in the church basement and continued until its

demise, <sup>in 1969-1970</sup> to hold its meetings there. In the Arts

there were the Negro Theatre Guild of Montreal which put many of its productions in the early sixties in the ~~black~~ church basement. One calls to mind the rave review that it received for

the play "Strictly Mainimony". One also recalls that "Pete Rodriguez" a now famous Canadian <sup>Black</sup> personality, <sup>major in</sup> play the role of Emperor Jones "put on by the company.

The was also Harlem Nocturnal, that still bring back memories of the twenties night in the middle of Montreal.

There were social clubs such as the Montreal Negro Alumni Group, Senior Girls, Birthday Clubs, Masonic Lodges, and orders, the Brotherhood of Steelmen Cam porters, and the Ailing MADA on George Viner Street around the corner from the Negro community center. They were poles apart

in their philosophies about how Blacks could and should be organized. The NCC grew out of the church and was supported by white paternalistic organizations. It spoke of living together in harmony at it time when it was obvious that this meant that blacks should be negroes should be docile. ~~essentially, many of its critics described its function to be that of~~ ~~its sole concern~~ ~~to bring up young blacks to tap dance, learn ballet steps very very imperfectly, pray, courtesy to the white man, and learn all those graces which would make it possible for them to be seen without being heard hearing them or without being disturbed in any other way by their presence.~~

The Students (primarily West Indian) at Sir George, and McGill dates the leadership and everything that this organization represented. They

were ~~more~~ attracted to the UNIA Hall with its Garveyite philosophy of "Black Power" ie independent black initiatives for the development of black people. But the old guard was growing old ~~and~~ their energy was dissipated by the cruel struggle, and the flight of youth <sup>from the seeming impracticality of their economic theory of black nationhood.</sup> ~~South Africa to Toronto.~~ It was the Church under Reverend Eke which had to ~~give birth~~ create once more the opportunity for a more practical and radical organ for the new immigrants and the students to rally around. That organ was the Negro Citizenship Association. Under the able leaderships of Richard Leslie, Dorothy Wills and later on students like Carl Whittaker,

(B)

Rudney Lovel, Vernon Eddes, Clarence Rayne, Winston Scott McRaeles, Eddie Howell, George Leckie-Richardson, and many others. The organization wage a war against discrimination in immigration, employment, ~~and~~ housing, justice agencies, education. It lobbied hard and furiously for the establishment of human rights legislation in Quebec. Some of the battles ita won are now landmarks in the development of the organized struggle of blacks in Quebec. One recalls the victory against the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, ~~for~~ and its refusal to hire a black nurse on the basis of race; and the integration of Diamond Taxi's; plus the countless representations made on behalf of blacks facing undiscriminatory deportation.

The ~~of~~ organization, because it had attracted dissatisfied black intellectuals was able to articulate issues as no other Black organization has managed to before it. It was also able to do this effectively through its magazine "Expression" (now defunct). Because it had this core of teachers, and other university types it was able to bridge the growing gap between the new breed of radical blacks <sup>Students</sup> ~~at~~ from the universities and the increasing disenchantment of the rapidly growing black immigrant population. With the indigenous leadership represented by MCC and the Church. They were also able to address themselves speak to ~~the~~ to the isolation and tension resulting from the cultural differences between the two groups; and they had to move

(4)

first to manage the tensions between the island groups many of whom were meeting other fellow West Indians for the first time. The West Indian Conference which began with the initiatives of the Students at McGill provided <sup>a partial</sup> the solution to the after West Indian tensions, but tended to heighten, at first the separation between Canadian Blacks and Immigrant Blacks. There was bitter resentment of West Indian Students and immigrants who for cultural ~~reason~~ and other reason moved, dined, danced, and slept in areas north of ~~the~~ St Catherine, bounded by St Laurent on the East and Atwater on the West. They rarely came into contact with or tried to associate with the indigenous blacks that they nonchalantly referred to as "St Antoine blacks." The conference began to bring <sup>two isolated</sup> ~~two isolated~~ groups together; but it took the mechanism of the Negro Citizenship Association and its intellectuals to pull them into contact with each other. This process <sup>started by about</sup> took place between 1964 and ~~1969~~. was completed in 1969 with the formation of the National Black Coalition. <sup>These</sup> events mark the <sup>(decade)</sup> coming of the two groups: the Black Writers Congress (described by Dennis <sup>1968</sup> Forsyth in Let the Niggers Burn) as an evangelical experience and the "Canadian Conference of Black Organizations" which brought Canadian Blacks and West Indian Blacks from all over Canada to deal with the issues affecting Black people in Canada: It resolved that a Nation Organization for Blacks

be established. And that was done in 1979 under extreme internal stress and conflict.

The mere fact that the two conferences were held in the same month one week apart attest to the divergent views of the leadership in the two groups. As the organizer of the Canadian Conference of Black Organization I represented the position that while the problems of Black all over the world were relevant to our struggle in Canada, that our concerns had to be primarily with the needs of and oppression of blacks in Canada first. The other group was concerned primarily with the "psychological breakups" as a primary stage in the movement for world revolution. We agreed to disagree, but the revolutionary momentum of the times led quite naturally to the ~~excitement~~<sup>initial</sup> of the computer crisis with both Whites and Blacks, Students and administration playing their roles with enthusiasm in the excitement. All the pockets of racism caught favorably to gain advantage from the situation; but unfortunately the crisis deepened and disaster struck for all. The Black community was ultimately to become more united through its resolve never to have decision made for it by students by virtue of ~~the~~ opting out of the struggle. As the Black adult community took up the reigns of responsibility for systematic struggle at last into direct confrontation with student idealism and disaster for the nation associated true struggle. The ~~Struggle~~ conflict was sharp and furious

(6)

but in Montreal it gave rise strong ~~NBC~~ <sup>regional</sup> NBC which to this day has survived internal conflict; and the formation of a vibration federation of Black organization called the Black Community Central Administration. The growth and maturing of the Black Community in Montreal saw the weaking of Student influence here. But in the mean while out of the turmoil and dynamics of the struggle ~~the~~ the seeds of change were expected through ~~the~~ the Students' Confrontation with expression of NBC to Toronto. The process is still going on there.

What do we have here work